

Unlicensed Medicines

What is this leaflet about?

In the UK most medicines are 'licensed' but some are not. This leaflet explains why medicines are licensed and why some useful medicines do not have licenses.

Your doctor or pharmacist will have given you this leaflet because the medicines prescribed for you are not 'licensed' or are being used for a reason not covered by the licence. We want to reassure you that we have thought very carefully about the best medicine for you and wish to answer any questions you may have.

Why are medicines licensed?

The makers of medicines must ask the government for a 'Product Licence' if they want to sell their medicines in the UK. They show the government's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) that their medicine works for the illness to be treated, does not have too many side effects or risks and has been made to a high standard.

How do the makers test medicines?

To be sure that a medicine works and is safe the maker has to try it first on a small number of people in what is called a 'clinical trial'. Information from clinical trials is given to the MHRA when the maker asks for a Product Licence.

Why don't all medicines have a licence?

There are several reasons why some medicines are used for illnesses or conditions not covered by their original licence. Also, some medicines do not have a licence at all.

Sometimes the clinical trials (and Product Licence) are for one illness but doctors find that the medicine works very well for another illness. These doctors use medicines for reasons that are not written in the Product Licences.

Some medicines have no licences at all.

How will I know that my medicine is not licensed?

Your doctor or pharmacist should tell you or when you read the information leaflet with the medicine you may notice that the information is not quite 'right'. The leaflet may not talk about your particular condition or illness.

Unlicensed medicines may be made specifically or may be more difficult to obtain. Your pharmacist may tell you this and make special arrangements for you to get your medicines.

How do I know that these medicines are safe and will work?

This medicine will have been recommended by another doctor who is an expert, or your own doctor who will have read information that says it is the best one for you.

Your pharmacist is trained to make medicines and if you need a special medicine will make sure that it is made and will work properly.

Should I be worried about taking these medicines?

If you are still worried after reading this leaflet, please talk to your doctor or pharmacist. They are looking after you and have thought carefully about the best medicine for you.

What if I don't want to take unlicensed medicines?

Talk it over with your doctor (or pharmacist) and tell them what you are worried about. They can tell you more about the information or advice they have about the medicine. They can also tell you about other treatments available and why they think this is the best one.

Can I get more information about my unlicensed medicine?

Your pharmacist may have a special information leaflet about your medicine or illness. Please ask. Often there are support groups for people with a particular condition. If you are a member you could talk to someone from that group. If you are not a member or don't know if there is a group, ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for information.

How do I get a further supply of my medicine if needed?

You will be told whether your next supply will be coming from the Hospital Pharmacy or whether your GP will be able to prescribe it.

You will probably need to give the pharmacy one or two weeks to obtain the supply for you, so it is important that you do not let your supply run out before going to the G.P.

If I'm confused what should I do?

Talk to the person who gave you this leaflet (usually your doctor or pharmacist). Ask them to explain.

Consent

Although you consent for this treatment, you may at any time after that withdraw such consent. Please discuss this with your medical team.

Sources of information

Further information can be obtained from:

- Medicines Information Conquest Hospital 01424 757067
- Medicines Information Eastbourne DGH 01323 413785
- Pharmacy Department, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
- NHS 111
- Your GP
- Your Local Pharmacy

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4784 or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4434 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
James Wilkinson, Assistant Medical Director (at least one from each site if appropriate)

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The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:
Medicines Optimisation group

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